

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**Hot Springs School District
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2004-2005**

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Dates of On Site Visit: October 25 and 26, 2004

Date of Report: October 26, 2004

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.

Meets Requirements The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.

Needs Improvement The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.

Out of Compliance The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.

Not applicable In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision

General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Student progress data
- Surveys
- Private school information
- Comprehensive plan
- TAT teacher assistance team: referral vs. non referral information
- Personnel training
- Budget Information
- Screening

Promising practice

The steering committee reported the district uses eight systems to dispense child find information and identify students in need of services. The comprehensive plan, IEPs, IDEA flow through application and contact log, the Hot Springs school district meets the requirements for children with disabilities who are voluntarily enrolled in private schools. Conclusions were based on the district's comprehensive plan, school financial records, and individual education plans.

Meets requirements

The steering committee indicated surveys, the referral tracking system, and the comprehensive plan are instrumental in the effectiveness of the referral system. Teacher input indicates some dissatisfaction with the pre-referral system. Based upon SAT9, Dakota Step results, and data Table D, the Hot Springs school district submits assessment participation data to the state annually. DACS data is also used at the middle school and Dakota STEP is now used at the elementary, middle and high school levels.

The data provided by data (Table C) and SASI and the comprehensive plan meet the requirements for collection of data for students placed in alternate educational settings.

Parent and staff surveys indicate more parents need to be invited to relevant staff training, and general education teachers need more training and supports to assist in implementing student IEPs.

Needs improvement

The steering committee reports 18 out of 55 teachers surveyed stated that they did not have input into the identification of the staff development needs and training activities.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee data for Principle One, General Supervision as meeting the requirements. Through interviews with administrators and regular education staff, the monitoring team reports that the district has an effective child find and pre-referral system for addressing individual student needs.

Needs improvement

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as needing improvement for general supervision. Through interviews with administrators and regular education staff, the monitoring team determined the district has changed procedures for seeking input from all staff for developing training activities and staff development opportunities.

Out of Compliance

ARSD 24:05:17:03 Annual report of children served

The district does not have documentation to verify services were being provided to one student listed on the district's 2003 child count. The district did not submit the IEP front page with the other child count information and the monitoring team checked the file during the onsite review. The Department of Education will withhold from the district the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) funds received for the misclassified student.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- State tables A – K
- District comprehension plan
- State administrative rules
- Extended school year documentation
- Child count
- IEP's
- Positive proactive procedure guidelines

Meets requirements

The steering committee stated parent surveys indicated 88% of parents were satisfied with their child's special education placement and services. Children from birth through 21 are served by the district through child find and placement in special education. Students receive extended school year when it is needed and least restrictive environment for two students was placement outside the school district. This is supported by the district comprehensive plan policies. Based upon the information collected, the district provides free appropriate public education to all eligible children with disabilities.

The district comprehensive plan procedures for suspension/expulsion identifies parent notification and procedural safeguards in section X, article 19, page 80. Functional behavioral assessments and manifestation determination meetings are held as needed. Interim alternative educational settings have been provided with collaboration between general and special education teachers. Records requested by law enforcement have been sent and students Family Education Rights and Privacy Act rights have been respected. Additionally, the district uses positive proactive measures to support students in special education.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting the requirements for Principle Two, Free Appropriate Public Education.



A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Prior notice/consent
- File review
- Parent rights booklet
- IEPs
- Comprehensive plan
- TAT form
- Referral form
- Flow chart
- Functional assessment
- Assessment technical manuals
- Assessment reports
- Out of district testing services
- Interpreters list for 2004

Promising practice

The review of student files demonstrated that the district ensure all students are reevaluated as necessary to assess continuing eligibility.

Meets requirements

The steering committee indicated through file review, 87-100% of evaluations and re-evaluations were completed in compliance with state requirements.

Needs improvement

The steering committee noted evaluations and reevaluations were in compliance with state requirements. The steering committee further stated file reviews and evaluation reports indicate functional assessments need to be summarized in written evaluation reports for parents. Students who are reevaluated are receiving a comprehensive evaluation. However, only 68% of the files reviewed met the timelines for reevaluation. The review of student files demonstrated the district ensures parental consent is acquired prior to reevaluation; however, parent input into the evaluation was available in only 70% of the files reviewed. The steering committee indicated reports from related services and vision/hearing reports need to be in the file. The district needs to seek evaluation reports for students that transfer in from other districts.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

Through file reviews and special education staff interviews, the monitoring team determined the district ensures all students are reevaluated to assess continued eligibility for special education.

Please refer to findings listed under the area of out of compliance for further information about conducting initial evaluation and reevaluations.

Needs improvement

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee data for Principle Three, Appropriate Evaluation as needing improvement with the exception of timelines, functional assessment, functional assessment reports. Through file reviews and interviews, the team noted parental input into the evaluation process, related services and vision/hearing reports were not consistently included in the student file, and the district did not consistently seek evaluation reports for students who transfer in from other districts.

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:05:25:04.02 Determination of needed evaluation data

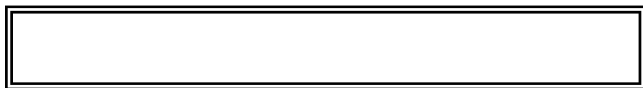
The school district must administer tests and other evaluations to produce the data required to determine eligibility.

ARSD 24:05:25:04 Evaluation procedures

The school district shall ensure a child is assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability and evaluation procedures include a wide variety of assessment tools and strategies to gather relevant functional and developmental information about the child including information provided by parents, that may assist in developing the content of the child's IEP.

Through staff interviews and student file reviews, the monitoring team noted evaluations and reevaluation are not in compliance with state requirements. A student listed on the child count as a child with multiple disabilities (530) (510,550,555,535) was evaluated in all areas of suspected disability except adaptive behavior. The cognitive scores were in the mentally retarded range. In five files reviewed, functional assessment was not completed, summarized into a report and used in the present levels of performance.

Special education staff is completing transition assessment with the exception of two files reviewed. Through interviews and file reviews, the monitoring team determined parental input into the evaluation process is not consistently completed prior to the completion of the prior notice. Refer to Principle Five for information pertaining to annual review timelines.



Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

- Prior written notice consent form
- District comprehensive plan
- Surrogate parent eligibility determination
- Determination of need for surrogate parent appointment form
- South Dakota surrogate parent manual

- Parent surveys
- Historical letters and public notices
- Requests for due process hearing forms

Meets requirements

Parent surveys and a review of prior notices indicate the district provides parents with their parental rights under IDEA in their primary language prior to consent. The district has provided surrogate training and appointed surrogates for three students in the past year. The rights of the child are protected through this process.

The district comprehensive plan, a review of district destruction of records procedures and file review indicate the district provides parents with the opportunity to inspect and review all educational records concerning the identification, evaluation, and educational placement of the child and the provision of a free appropriate public education. FERPA information is published on the district website and the student handbook and staff is trained re: confidentiality annually.

The steering committee reported through a review of records, the district has not had any complaints filed with the special education program in the past 3 years. Policies and procedures are in place for responding to complaints that ensure compliance.

The steering committee stated through a review of records, the district has not has a request for due process within the past four years. Due process hearing procedures are specified in the district comprehensive plan, Section VII procedural safeguards, page 58-64.

Needs improvement

The steering committee reported prior notice/consent for evaluation was obtained 91% of the time for initial evaluation and 89% for reevaluation based on parent survey and prior notice in file reviews.

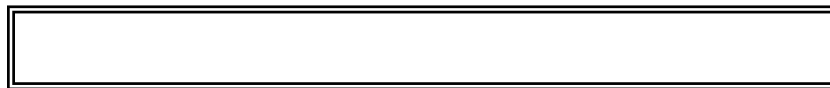
Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with the areas identified as meeting the requirements for procedural safeguards as noted by the steering committee.

Needs improvement

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as needing improvement for procedural safeguards as noted by the steering committee. Through the review of 20 student files, the monitoring team noted in two files, prior notice/consent was not included in the file.



The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Comprehensive plan

- Teacher file reviews
- Student progress data
- Personnel training

Meets requirements

The steering committee reports representatives from other agencies were not always invited to meetings where transition was discussed. State assessments, “as needed” modification statements, and modifications/support for students are areas needing to improve. The steering committee reports documentation for transition evaluations, including life-planning outcomes for employment for students turning 14 years old were not consistently completed.

Needs improvement

The steering committee stated IEP files were not always reviewed within 365 days and IEPs were not always held within 30 calendar days of the receipt of the evaluation results. The district’s progress towards meeting annual goals and short-term objectives need to improve.

Validation Results

Needs improvement

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee data, agency representatives are not consistently invited to IEP meetings and modification/accommodation statements are marked “as needed” in four of 20 files reviewed. The monitoring team noted agency representation greatly improved since the district completed the self-assessment. Through file reviews and interviews with middle school and high school special education staff, the review team determined transition evaluations for students turning 14 years old are not consistently completed.

Out of compliance

ARSD 24:0527:08 Yearly review and revision of IEP

The monitoring team agrees with steering committee data, IEP files were not always reviewed within 365 days and IEP meetings were not consistently held within 30 calendar days of the receipt of evaluation results. In three of 20 student files reviewed, IEP’s were not held within 30 calendar days of the receipt of the evaluation results.

In the following three files, the monitoring team noted the district was over the 365 day timeline.

- 12-16-03/12-17-04
- 10-29-03/11-3-04
- 9-11-03/9-23-04

ARSD 24:05:27:21 Transition to preschool

Each school district shall develop policies and procedures for the transition of children participating in the early intervention program under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) who are eligible for participation in preschool programs under Part B of IDEA. In one student file, the monitoring team determined the district received a referral for a comprehensive evaluation on 3-4-04 for transition from Part C to Part B from Birth to 3 Connections, Youth and Family Services. The evaluation was not completed prior to the child’s 3rd birthday; the meeting was held on 5-26-04.

ARSD 24:05:27:01.03 Content of IEP

Annual goals must be measurable, must be based on a years-projected progress and reasonable to accomplish in one year.

Through file reviews, the monitoring team noted annual goals are broad, vague and not measurable. Example:

1. The student will increase his use and comprehension of vocabulary.
2. The student will demonstrate appropriate social behavior.
3. The student will increase receptive vocabulary from present level to 90% accuracy in 7-9 opportunities.

Justification for placement must include an explanation of the extent, if any, to which the student will not participate with non-disabled students in the regular classroom. The monitoring team determined special education staff does not have a clear understanding how to pursue writing justification for placement statements. Special educators do not use the accept/reject method required for writing justification for placement statements. Justification statements must include an explanation of the extent, if any, to which the child will not participate with non-disabled children in the general classroom and in extracurricular and non-academic activities.



After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- Student file review tabulation
- State table F
- Student survey
- Comprehensive plan
- In-service agenda
- Child count
- Teacher surveys

Promising practice

The steering committee reports the district considers least restrictive environment in placing children for optimal educational opportunities.

Validation Results

Promising practice

The monitoring team reports the district preschool as a promising practice. The preschool consists of students with disabilities, students receiving Title services and peer models. The preschool is funded by the district. There are two full time teachers and two paraprofessionals in each room. High school students have an opportunity to volunteer at the preschool. Students attend preschool four days a week. 4-5 year olds attend preschool in the afternoons Monday through Thursday and 3 year olds attend Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings.

The program serves up to 50 children ages 3-5 with and without disabilities. Children are identified for preschool based upon DIAL III screening, parent checklist, parent or physician referral, free/reduced lunch status, and special education needs.

The 3 year old sessions are 2.5 hours 3 or 4 days/week including breakfast. The 4-5 year old sessions attend for 3.5 hours four days/week including lunch. The staff to student ratio is 2 adults for 12 children (children with special needs will participate with at risk children during outside play time, meals, and various learning center activities.) The curriculum is teacher developed based upon High Scope guidelines, Creative Curriculum by Trister-Dodge, and Zoo Phonics Inc. for preschool. Progress is measured by teacher. The district is collecting data to determine the effectiveness of their preschool program. Through interviews with administrators and teachers, the monitoring team notes observation information, test scores and dismissal from special education are indicators of program success.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team reports consideration of least restrictive environment in placing children for optimal educational opportunities meets the requirements of the state and federal regulations.